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Runge, YEVGENY Y. (LT. COL.)

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East-West Bridges Tumbling Down

The more glimpses we get into the sinister world of the cloak and the dagger the curi-
ouser it becomes. The most recent case in
point is a report that one reason our Central
Intelligence Agency made such a public thing
of the defection of the Soviet agent Yevgeny
Y. Runge was that he was an *illegal* spy.

Heretofore we lived under the naive delu-
sion that all spies were illegal, that the name
of the game, as they say, was cheating. Per-
haps it still is, but certain refinements have
developed. Like Prohibition gangsters, spies
have found it convenient to work out some
ground rules.

It is generally accepted in better espionage
circles, we are told, that a nation does not
saturate the market in a given country with
agents; rather, a numerical balance is dis-
creetly maintained. And it is agreed that
there should be only two classifications of
spies—those assigned to embassies ostensibly
as clerks or chauffeurs, and citizens of for-
eign nations who work in their native coun-
tries as paid agents. The advantages are
obvious. No need for a scorecard, no time
lost trailing the wrong people, no hiding mi-
crophones anywhere but in the other fellow's
embassy, no risk of doing away with a *real*
tourist, and so on. In short, ground rules
keep down overhead and minimize ulcers.

Now along come those unethical Russians
with a spy who is neither a native informant
nor a member of a Soviet embassy staff, but
a man operating under entirely false pre-
tenses. For 11 years Yevgeny Runge plied his
trade as a spy, all the while posing as Willi
Gast, ordinary West German vending ma-
chine salesman. A clear breach of spy eti-
quette if we've ever heard one. We shudder

at the damage this revelation may do to East-
West bridge building, not to mention the
credibility of every West German vending
machine salesman. As they are no doubt fond
of saying at CIA headquarters, if you can't
trust a spy, whom can you trust?